

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
FLOOR STATEMENT ON ITER AMENDMENT TO ENERGY AND WATER
APPROPRIATIONS BILL
May 24, 2005

Mr. Chairman:

Let me start by thanking Chairman Hobson for working with us on this entire bill and on our amendment. I understand that the amendment will be accepted, and I appreciate that.

But I do want to explain this amendment because its purpose is to bring to a head an important issue that might otherwise be overlooked.

The Department of Energy is moving ahead with negotiating U.S. participation in ITER, the international fusion energy project, which is all to the good. I support U.S. participation in ITER, a critical experiment that will help determine, finally, if fusion is a realistic option for energy production. If it is, fusion might go a long way toward solving our looming energy supply shortfall.

But ITER is expensive. The U.S. contribution is expected to exceed \$1 billion. And I want to make sure that before we commit a dime to ITER that we have a consensus on how we will find that money.

I am very, very tired of the U.S. signing on to international science agreements that we later come to regret. We're then left with the Hobson's choice – the Chairman will excuse the expression – the Hobson's choice of either reneging on our international agreement or funneling money into a project we don't actually need.

So this time we have a chance to avoid that uncomfortable choice. We have time to ensure that the Administration and the Congress and the fusion science community

agree on how we're going to pay for ITER before we sign on the dotted line. And that's exactly what this amendment is designed to guarantee.

The amendment says, in effect, that we can't finalize an agreement on ITER before March 1 of next year. By then we will have in hand both the proposed ITER agreement and the President's fiscal 2007 budget request. With that information, we should be able to determine if there is a consensus on moving forward.

I don't think there is a consensus now. The Department of Energy says that ITER is its top science facility priority, and that other programs, including other fusion programs may have to be cut to fund it. In any event, the domestic fusion program will have to change for ITER to move forward. That makes sense to me.

But the fusion community and apparently the appropriators seem to be saying that the domestic fusion program has to be held harmless for ITER to move forward. That's simply not realistic, and we cannot move forward with ITER with that presumption. So we need to decide before we commit to ITER whether we're willing to make the necessary sacrifices to pay for it.

Again, my amendment will give us time to do that, and I look forward to working with everyone concerned to try to reach a consensus. But the U.S. must not finalize an agreement on ITER until we have consensus on how to pay for it – not just an Administration plan – a consensus.

In the meantime, the site selection and planning process and negotiations on ITER can and should continue. But I will do all I can to prevent the U.S. from entering into an agreement if no one is willing to make the sacrifices necessary to pay for it.

Moving ahead without consensus will mean either reneging on our agreement or killing other worthy programs within the Office of Science to pay the disproportionate costs of the fusion program. Let's avoid that.

Again, I look forward to working with Chairman Hobson and everyone concerned with this issue to build a strong and balanced fusion program.